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District Man Pleads Guilty to Charges in Failed Scheme to Deceive a Federal Judge – Was Attempting to Obtain a \$3 Million Default Judgment in Civil Lawsuit –

WASHINGTON - David Copeland-Jackson, 37, of Washington, D.C., pled guilty today to federal charges stemming from a plot to deceive a federal judge into awarding him a \$3 million default judgment in a civil lawsuit, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office.

Copeland-Jackson, a convicted sex offender, was attempting to win the judgment in a defamation suit against one of his victims. The plot was unraveled and he never got the money.

He pled guilty in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to a charge of conspiracy to commit obstruction of justice and perjury for carrying out the ruse.

In a separate, unrelated scheme that involved more than \$62,000 in student financial aid, Copeland-Jackson pled guilty to mail fraud. Both pleas were made before the Honorable Judge Richard J. Leon, who scheduled Copeland-Jackson's sentencing for May 12, 2011.

Copeland-Jackson has been detained since July 9, 2009, when he was arrested on the conspiracy charge. He faces a statutory sentence of up to five years in prison on the conspiracy charge and a maximum sentence of 20 years on the mail fraud charge, and a fine of up to \$250,000 for each offense. Under terms of a plea agreement to resolve both charges, the Government and defendant agreed that an appropriate sentence would be 51 to 63 months.

Peter J. Brandel Sr., 71, of Mansfield, Ohio, and Copeland-Jackson's co-conspirator in the obstruction-of-justice scheme, also has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit obstruction of justice and perjury. He is awaiting sentencing by Judge Leon. Under the terms of Brandel's plea agreement, the parties agreed an appropriate sentence would be 24 to 30 months in prison.

According to the Statement of Offense filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office with the Court, Copeland-Jackson was convicted in Ohio in 2000 on charges of gross sexual imposition against two 14-year-olds. After serving three years in an Ohio prison for the offense, Copeland-Jackson was paroled to his hometown, Washington, D.C., and ordered not to have any contact with the victims of his earlier crimes.

However, while on parole, in June 2007 Copeland-Jackson filed a \$3 million defamation suit in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against one of the two victims, a male identified in the Statement of Offense only as "J.C."

The lawsuit was assigned to U.S. District Judge Ellen S. Huvelle. Rather than serve J.C. with a copy of the lawsuit, as required, Copeland-Jackson filed a false affidavit with Judge Huvelle. The affidavit - signed by Brandel - claimed that J.C. had been served with the suit. Without J.C.'s knowledge, for more than a month, Copeland-Jackson then filed numerous pleadings for both himself, as plaintiff, and for J.C., as defendant, in the case.

On August 8, 2007, Judge Huvelle awarded a \$3 million default judgment against J.C. to Copeland-Jackson. The judge took this action after receiving a document, purportedly from J.C., in which J.C. admitted the allegations in the lawsuit and consented to the judgment.

Judge Huvelle was unaware that Copeland-Jackson had gone to prison in Ohio for the very acts that were the supposed subject of the defamation lawsuit. The Ashland County prosecutor in Ohio subsequently alerted the judge that Copeland-Jackson was on parole for having molested J.C. when he was a minor. At that point, Judge Huvelle immediately vacated the default judgment and set a hearing on the matter for August 16, 2007.

According to the Statement of Offense, at the hearing, Brandel testified falsely under oath that he had served a copy of the Copeland-Jackson lawsuit on J.C.

The mail fraud scheme took place between 2005 and 2009. Copeland-Jackson fraudulently obtained more than \$62,000 in federal student financial aid by enrolling three relatives and five former inmates in college courses at online universities and then collecting their student aid checks. That case was investigated by the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, and the Washington Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Copeland-Jackson falsified certain material information about the individuals purportedly entitled to the financial aid. He falsely listed his own address as that of the phony student, thus causing the student aid checks to be mailed directly to his apartment in the District of Columbia.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen and Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin commended the work of the Special Agents from the Washington Field Office who investigated the conspiracy case.

U.S. Attorney Machen was joined by Steven Anderson, Special Agent in Charge, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, and Keith A. Fixel, Acting Postal Inspector in Charge, U.S. Postal Inspection Service - Washington Division, in commending those who investigated the mail fraud scheme. They cited Special Agent Jason Williams, of the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Postal Inspectors Christopher Saunders and Steven Watai.

U.S. Attorney Machen and the other officials also praised those who worked on the matters from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Legal Assistant Jamasee Lucas, and Paralegals Diane Hayes, Tasha Harris and Mary Treanor. They acknowledged the work of former Assistant U.S. Attorney James A. Mitzelfeld, who investigated and obtained an indictment in the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Haray, who is currently prosecuting the case.

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